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# US begins new round of negotiations on Namibian independence

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Diplomatic efforts to gain independence for Namibia seem to be back to Square 1. But some analysts see a glimmer of hope in the apparent political strengthening of Angolan President José Eduardo dos Santos, whose agreement is essential to any independence settlement.

Mr. dos Santos seems more inclined toward a compromise agreement on Namibia (South West Africa) than other members of his government. His position was apparently strengthened at the recent congress of his ruling Popular Liberation Movement of Angola (MPLA).

The United States is resuming its push for a Namibia agreement. Chester Crocker, the US assistant secretary of state, arrived in Angola Wednesday for talks on Namibia. For four years, Mr. Crocker has been trying to get Angola to send 30,000 Cuban troops home; in exchange, South Africa would withdraw from Namibia and permit UN-supervised elections to take place. South Africa administers Namibia in defiance of the UN.

But thus far, Crocker's initiative has, in the words of a West European diplomat, "failed miserably." The Reagan administration says there has been progress.

In his earlier talks, Crocker had persuaded the Angolans to accept a linkage between Namibian independence and the departure of Cuban troops from Angola.

Slowly the gap between the South African and Angolan positions narrowed. Angola offered to send its estimated 25,000 Cubans home over a period of three years, keeping 5,000 Cubans around the capital. Pretoria

demanding that all Cubans leave within six months.

There was room for further compromise. But last May, when a top-secret meeting between South African President P. W. Botha and Angolan President dos Santos was about to take place, South African commandos were captured trying to sabotage American-owned oil installations in the northern Angolan province of Cabinda. Pretoria said the commandos were gathering intelligence data.

Despite South Africa's action, dos Santos agreed to continue talks both with the US and with South Africa. But in a meeting last November, Crocker added a new condition, linking Namibian independence to the establishment of a reconciliation regime in Angola that would include Jonas Savimbi, whose insurgents (the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola, or UNITA) are waging civil war against the Angolan government. According to a senior Angolan diplomat, the US said that, unless Mr. Savimbi was made co-leader of Angola, it would continue to provide him with aid.

The US Congress has lifted its ban on such aid, and in a speech last fall President Reagan for the first time included Savimbi's insurgent group among the "freedom fighters" which "the United States felt morally obligated to support." Savimbi is expected in Washington later

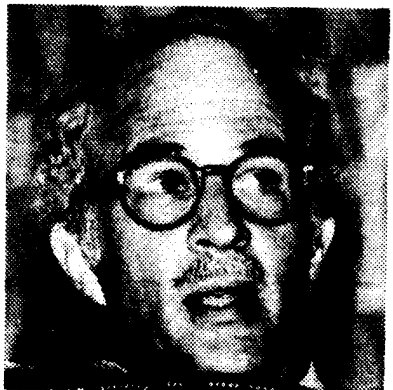
this month where he will meet with high administration officials and key senators.

US Secretary of State George Shultz has delayed providing covert aid to UNITA in the hope that dos Santos would agree to the new terms which, one Angolan source here, calls "political hari-kari."

Angola has been able to deal severe blows to UNITA in recent months. Savimbi had been put on the defensive and South Africa felt a need to intervene late last year. Pretoria wanted to create a situation that would freeze diplomatic efforts and allow South Africa to move its forces back into Angola to bail out Savimbi, according to a West European diplomat recently stationed in Luanda. Pretoria, however, said it went into Angola in pursuit of SWAPO guerrillas.

At the recent party congress, dos Santos filled the Central Committee with personal supporters (by enlarging it from 57 to 90 seats). Though he professes to be Marxist, he has spoken out against dogmatism and in favor of "pragmatism." He dismissed several pro-Soviet hardliners.

"All domestic obstacles to a negotiated settlement have now been removed and dos Santos has a free hand to work out a compromise solution with South Africa," says one African pro-Western source.



Chester Crocker in Angola renews search for Namibia settlement